

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD  
IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND THE CHURCH LIFE**

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six

**The Conflict of the Two Kingdoms  
and  
the Work and Responsibility of the Church**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 6:10; 12:26, 28-29; Eph. 6:10-12; Rev. 12:10; 11:15

**I. In the universe there are two kingdoms—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan—Matt. 6:10, 33; 12:26, 28:**

- A. A kingdom is a totality of a certain life:
  - 1. God has His life, out of which the kingdom of God comes into existence—Eph. 4:18; Matt. 12:28.
  - 2. Satan has his evil life, out of which the kingdom of Satan comes into existence—John 8:44; Matt. 12:26.
- B. The two trees in Genesis 2:9, as signs of God and Satan, are two sources; the outcome of the two sources becomes the two kingdoms—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan—Matt. 12:26, 28.
- C. The entire human race is a kingdom not merely of the human life but even more of the satanic life—13:38; John 8:44; Acts 13:10; 1 John 3:10:
  - 1. Humanity has become the totality of the satanic life with all its activities—5:19.
  - 2. The human kingdom has become the satanic kingdom, the kingdom of Satan.
- D. Satan, the god of this age, is the ruler of the world and the ruler of the authority of the air—John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2:
  - 1. He has his authority and his angels, who are his subordinates as rulers, authorities, and world-rulers of the darkness of this world—Acts 26:18; Matt. 25:41; Eph. 6:12.
  - 2. Satan has his kingdom, the authority of darkness—Col. 1:13.
- E. There are two kingdoms on earth—the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God in the light; these two kingdoms are now confronting each other on earth—Acts 26:18.

**II. Because the Lord Jesus, the heavenly King, has come to establish the kingdom of God among men on earth, the two kingdoms are in conflict; a battle is raging, and there is the need for us to fight the battle—Eph. 6:12:**

- A. Spiritual warfare is the warfare between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan—Matt. 12:26, 28:
  - 1. The purpose of spiritual warfare is to bring in the kingdom of God—Rev. 12:10.
  - 2. The kingdom of God is the exercise of the divine will and the overthrowing of the power of Satan by the power of God—Matt. 6:10; 12:28.

- B. There are two great principles in the universe—God’s authority and Satan’s rebellion; the unique controversy between God and Satan concerns authority and rebellion—Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13:
  - 1. Rebellion is the denial of God’s authority and the rejection of God’s rule—Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:2-19.
  - 2. Although Satan rebelled against God’s authority and although man violates His authority by rebelling against Him, God will not let this rebellion continue; He will establish His kingdom on the earth—Rev. 11:15.
  - 3. The kingdom of God is the power to subdue rebellion—Mark 4:35-41.
  - 4. The Lord Jesus, God incarnate, came to establish the kingdom of God—to establish a realm in which God can carry out His purpose through the exercise of His authority—John 1:1, 14; 3:3, 5; 18:36.
- C. The Lord cast out demons by the Spirit of God so that the kingdom of God might come—Matt. 12:28:
  - 1. As the Lord cast out demons, He was fighting, destroying Satan’s kingdom, and bringing in the kingdom of God—v. 28; Mark 3:23-28; Luke 9:1.
  - 2. The Spirit of God is the power of the kingdom of God; where the Spirit of God is in power, there the kingdom of God is, and the demons have no ground—Matt. 12:28.
  - 3. Where the Spirit of God exercises authority over opposition and rebellion against God, that is the kingdom of God—v. 28.
- D. Matthew 12 reveals that Satan is the strong man usurping the God-created people and that in order to bring people out of the usurping hand of the strong man, there is the need to bind him—v. 29:
  - 1. Before the Lord Jesus cast out demons, He first bound the strong man; this is the secret of spiritual fighting.
  - 2. The “house” in Matthew 12:29 refers to the kingdom of Satan, and “his goods” refers to the fallen people, who are under Satan, who are his vessels, his instruments, and who are kept in his house for his use.
  - 3. This shows us that if we would establish the kingdom of God and take fallen human beings out of Satan’s kingdom, we must first bind the strong man; the way to bind the strong man is to pray—Mark 9:25-29.
  - 4. This is the fighting of the spiritual battle for establishing the kingdom of God—2 Cor. 10:3-5.

**III. The work of the church is to bring in the kingdom of God; the church bears the responsibility of bringing the kingdom of God to the earth—Matt. 6:10; 12:22-29; Rev. 11:15; 12:10:**

- A. The church was brought into being for the purpose of bringing in the kingdom—Matt. 16:18-19; 18:17-18; Rev. 1:6, 9; 11:15:
  - 1. The church’s responsibility is to perpetuate Christ’s victory and to bring in God’s kingdom—12:10; 11:15.
  - 2. The work of the church on earth is to bring in the kingdom of God; all the work of the church is governed by the principle of the kingdom of God.
  - 3. The church is responsible for bringing heaven’s will down to earth and for carrying it out on earth—Matt. 6:10; 7:21; 12:50.

- B. The church, which comes into being under the rule of heaven, by reason of her submission to the heavenly rule, deals with God's enemy—16:19; Eph. 6:10-18:
  - 1. In order for the kingdom of the heavens to be established, there is the need of spiritual fighting—Matt. 12:22-29.
  - 2. The responsibility of the church is to continue the warfare that Christ fought on earth; the church must continue the victorious work that Christ has carried out against Satan—Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8b; Col. 2:15; Psa. 149:5-9.
- C. The church should pray to bring in the kingdom of God—Matt. 6:10:
  - 1. The coming of the kingdom is not automatic; if there is no prayer, the kingdom cannot come.
  - 2. The prayer of the church is the most effective means of curbing Satan—16:19; 18:18.
  - 3. The church must be the outlet of heaven, allowing heaven's authority to be expressed on earth—16:18-19; 18:18.
  - 4. Genuine prayer is a joint labor with God to bring His kingdom to the earth and to carry out His will on earth; hence, prayer is a spiritual battle—6:10; 2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:12.
- D. The church needs to utter prayers of warfare in order to bring in God's kingdom and to drive out God's enemy:
  - 1. Such prayer indicates that we are standing on God's side and are opposed to God's enemy.
  - 2. Fighting prayers drive away the power of darkness, bring in God's authority, and enable God to have His will done on earth—Matt. 6:10.
  - 3. Whether or not the kingdom of God can come to the earth and God can rule on earth depends on whether or not we pray fighting prayers, prayers of spiritual warfare—Psa. 144:5; Isa. 64:1.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE KING CASTING OUT DEMONS BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD  
THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD MAY COME**

Matthew 12:28 says, "But if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." The Spirit of God is the power of the kingdom of God. Where the Spirit of God is in power, there the kingdom of God is, and there the demons have no ground. By the Lord's word here we see that the battle fought for the kingdom is fought not by just a man himself but by a man with the Spirit of God. In verse 28 the Lord said that He cast out demons by the Spirit of God and that this is the coming of the kingdom of God. Wherever the Spirit of God exercises His authority over the opposing situation, that is the kingdom of God.

The Lord is always careful with His words. In verse 28 He speaks of the kingdom of God, not of the kingdom of the heavens. Even at that time, the kingdom of the heavens had still not come. The kingdom of God, however, was there already.

**BINDING THE STRONG MAN, ENTERING INTO HIS HOUSE,  
AND PLUNDERING HIS VESSELS**

Verse 29 reveals that before the Lord cast out the demon, He firstly fought against Satan. This verse says, "Or how can anyone enter into the house of the strong man and plunder his

goods [or vessels] unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will thoroughly plunder his house.” The “house” here signifies the kingdom of Satan, and “the strong man” is Satan, the evil one. The Greek word translated “vessels” also means “instruments, apparatus; hence, goods, stuff.” The fallen people under Satan are his vessels, his instruments for his use. They are his goods kept in his house, his kingdom. The word about binding the strong man indicates that when the Lord cast out demons, He first bound Satan. The people saw only the casting out of the demon. They did not see the binding of Satan, the strong man. Thus, the Lord used the opportunity afforded Him by the accusation of the Pharisees to reveal the secret of spiritual fighting. Apparently, the Lord was only casting out the demon; actually, He was fighting, binding the strong man. This shows us that if we would build the kingdom today, we must first bind the strong man.

The way to bind the strong man is to pray. When we come to chapter 17, we shall see that the disciples came to the Lord and asked Him why He could cast out the demon and they could not. In 17:21 the Lord told His disciples, “This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” If you do not pray and fast, you simply cannot cast out this kind of demon. The Lord’s word to His disciples indicates that before He cast out a demon, He surely fasted and prayed. In order to bind the strong man, we must fast and pray. The Lord fasted and prayed secretly. The disciples did not see this. We must learn of the Lord to fast in secret and to pray in secret. I believe that when the Lord Jesus was on earth, He often fasted and prayed to fight the battle and to bind the strong man. We all must be in the same spirit today. Every day our spirit must be a fasting spirit and a praying spirit so that we may daily bind the strong man, who is Satan, the king of the kingdom of darkness.

Satan has a kingdom of darkness on earth, and the whole earth is under his usurpation. It is difficult to take one out of Satan’s hand. Every fallen person is a vessel in Satan’s house. Satan’s house is his kingdom, and in his house are many vessels, the many fallen persons. In order to take a fallen person out of Satan’s house, we must bind the strong man by prayer and fasting. This is the fighting of the spiritual battle for the establishment of the kingdom of the heavens.

Chapter 12 of Matthew occupies a special place in the New Testament because it reveals that Satan has a kingdom, that Satan is the strong man usurping all the God-created people, and that in order to take people out of his usurping hand, there is the need to bind him. The way to bind the strong man is by fasting and praying. The battle unveiled in chapter 12 is not seen in the foregoing eleven chapters. In those chapters we see the rest and the breaking of the regulations for the Head and for the members of the Body. But we do not see the kingdom of darkness. There are two kingdoms on earth: one is the kingdom of darkness, and the other is the kingdom of the heavens in the light. These two kingdoms are now confronting each other on earth. Therefore, there is the need to fight the battle. We all must fast and pray to bind the strong man. Then we shall be able to plunder his house.

This is a real revelation. Not many Christians have read Matthew 12 in this way because they do not see the kingdom. To them, the kingdom is either simply a doctrinal term or something suspended for a future time. But we realize that all that the Lord is doing with us today is for the establishment of the heavenly kingdom. We are the kingdom people. Today a battle is raging between two kingdoms. The continuation of the Lord’s ministry produced the opportunity for this further revelation. (*Life-study of Matthew*, pp. 410-413)

#### **PRAYER AND GOD’S ENEMY**

Prayer is categorically related to God’s enemy. God’s authority is under attack in the universe because of the existence of God’s enemy. In the Bible the kingdom of God is of great

significance. The enemy of God is also a very crucial issue in the Scripture. God's authority suffers frustration and limitation in the universe because there is a rebellious Satan in the universe.

There is a very great conflict in the universe between God and His enemy Satan. You may say that the Bible is a book of life, and you may also say that the Bible is a book of warfare. There is a line in the Scripture that is the line of warfare. Satan first rose to revolt and to rebel. Then God came out to deal with him, and the universal warfare began. Today's worldly statesmen and military experts are searching for ways to eliminate war and promote peace. They do not understand that the happenings on the earth are entirely tied to the warfare between God and Satan. When will peace come to the human race? That will have to wait until the day when God's enemy will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit. Then in the whole universe there will be no more war between God and Satan, and likewise, wars among the human race will cease. Human warfare stems entirely from the universal warfare between God and the devil. When the universal warfare is settled, there will be no more wars among men. Hence, we should utter prayers of warfare, on one hand, to bring in God's kingdom and, on the other hand, to drive out God's enemy. Prayer indicates that man is standing on God's side and that man is opposed to God's enemy.

There are three main figures in the universe: God, Satan, and man. Never belittle man. God has never belittled man. God, Satan, and man may be considered the three big heads in the universe. Satan's intention is to overthrow God's authority. God's desire is to do away with the rebellious Satan. However, God does not wish to deal with Satan directly, and Satan has no way to destroy God's authority by his own strength. God needs to work through man to deal with Satan, and Satan also needs to work through man to frustrate God. The solution to the problems existing between God and the devil is tied to man. Man is the critical figure in the universe. If man stands on God's side, God predominates. If man stands on Satan's side, then Satan prevails.

There is a line of truth in the Bible that is concerned with the conflict between God and Satan. This line necessarily includes God and Satan's struggle to gain man. God wants to have man, and Satan also wants to gain man. God wants man to cooperate with Him; Satan also wants man to cooperate with him. God wants to enter into man; Satan also wants to get into man. God wants to be mingled with man; Satan also wants to be mixed with man. In this context, what is prayer? On the one hand, prayer is man expressing to God that he wants God and that he is standing on God's side. On the other hand, it is man telling Satan that he is standing with God to oppose Satan. Hence, the purpose of prayer is to bring in God's kingdom and to drive Satan away.

Our ordinary concept in praying for sinners is to pray that their soul would be saved. But the fact is, true prayers for men's souls are to deal with Satan and to bring in God's kingdom. When a person does not believe in the Lord Jesus, it is not just a matter of his soul going to hell. Even more, it is a matter of Satan's ruling over him. His going to hell is a matter bound up with the great matter of Satan's ruling over him. So, I need to pray for him in order to chase Satan away from him, to deliver him from the power of darkness, and to bring God's kingdom to him. True prayers will always, on the one hand, bring God's kingdom to man and, on the other hand, drive away Satan's power from man. Every time a sinner gets saved, it signifies a partial defeat of Satan's power and a partial coming of God's kingdom. This is the prayer of warfare.

In the Bible it is a very great principle that God Himself does not deal with Satan directly. Rather, He uses man. Some may say, "Isn't God dealing with Satan through His Son? The Scripture says, 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy

the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Yes, this is true. But the Son of God came to deal with Satan in the human flesh. He came as a man standing on man’s position and put on man to deal with Satan. To deal with His enemy, God needs to use man. If man does not cooperate with Him, He cannot do anything. Likewise, to bring salvation to man, God also needs man to pray. Without man praying for the souls of sinners, God can never save men. The salvation of any person is the result of someone praying for him. God has no way to save men directly. God’s salvation is indirect; it needs to go through man. Here we see how crucial man’s position is. Man’s prayer indicates whether he is standing on God’s side or on Satan’s. Once you bow your knees before God, you indicate that in the universal conflict you are standing on God’s side, and you are totally opposed to God’s enemy. Your prayer is, positively, bringing in God’s kingdom and, negatively, overthrowing God’s enemy.

Every genuine prayer is a prayer of casting out the demons. Suppose a certain brother’s home has no peace. The husband and wife quarrel. If you really know what prayer is, you will be able to utter fighting prayers for them and cast out the quarreling demon from their home. I really mean it. The husband and wife quarrel because Satan has gained a position between them. When you pray for them, on the one hand, you are bringing in God’s kingdom and, on the other hand, driving away God’s enemy. Then between them there will be God’s authority but no power of Satan. This is true prayer.

This is also true concerning prayer for the church. Disagreements and contentions are in the church because Satan has gained a place. So we pray for the church in order to bring in God’s kingdom and drive out Satan’s power. All genuine prayers are of a twofold purpose: on the positive side, to bring in God’s kingdom and, on the negative side, to cast out Satan’s power. This kind of prayer effects God’s success as well as Satan’s defeat. The more we pray this kind of prayer, the more severe will be Satan’s defeat, and the more God’s kingdom will come.

#### **THE POSITION OF GOD’S ENEMY**

We will now look at the position of God’s enemy. Speaking of the spiritual warfare, Ephesians 6 says that God’s enemy, the power of darkness, is in the air. Both in Ephesians and Colossians there are several places which tell us that the rulers and the authorities are in the air. So the position of God’s enemy is in the air. On the other hand, the Bible also shows that the sphere of the activities of God’s enemy is on earth. Satan usurps the air as his dwelling place and controls the earth as the sphere of his activities. So the Lord Jesus wants us to pray that God’s kingdom may come and that God’s will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. The whole earth today, on the one hand, is under God’s rule. But on the other hand, if you observe the situation everywhere, you will sense that no one cares for God’s will and God’s authority, for the whole earth has been usurped by Satan.

If you can visualize the situation, you will see that God is in the heavens, Satan is in the air, and man is on the earth. The entire earth is under the control of the air, and man is under the control of Satan. Daniel 10 reveals that as Daniel prayed earnestly and set his heart to understand, God sent a messenger from the heavens telling him that his prayers were heard. The angel encountered the prince of Persia in the air and was not able to get through. The fighting lasted three weeks. Eventually, Michael came to help the angel, who was then able to get through the air and come to Daniel on the earth. Such passages in the Bible make known to us the spiritual things in the universe. Satan usurps the air and controls the earth. If Hades, which is underneath the earth, is added, then three out of the four places in the universe are held in Satan’s hands. Only the heaven is left for God. Such is the position of Satan.

## **THE POSITION OF PRAYER**

The position of prayer is the position of ascension. All who do not pray from the position of ascension fall under the control of Satan. Genuine prayers are always uttered in the heavenly realm. Mrs. Penn-Lewis once said that one must first see clearly the position of ascension in Ephesians 2 in order to have the fighting prayers in Ephesians 6. Once you fall to the earth, you are under Satan's hand, and you will not be able to deal with him. Daniel's prayer was, on the one hand, on earth and, on the other hand, in the heavenly realm. His condition and nature were entirely heavenly, so his prayer was able to deal with the enemy...

You must be an ascended one in order to pray for others. If you are stirred by a particular matter and act in your flesh, you fall from the heaven to the earth and cannot pray. You cannot pray for those things until the Lord shows His mercy and you recover your ascended position. One who is unable to pray surely is on the earth. When others quarrel and you become involved in it, you lose your position to pray. Under such circumstances, you have no way to deal with God's enemy.

After reading Daniel's prayer, you must admit that he was really one who had ascended to the heavens, entered the Holy of Holies, and touched the throne. Although he was one who lived on earth, he lived in the realm of the heavenlies. Therefore, his prayer was powerful, being able to solve the problems of God's people on the earth.

This is the principle of prayer not only when we pray for big things, such as God's will and God's work, but even when we pray for ourselves—our health, our family, and our business. Always keep in mind that Satan's position is in the air. Therefore, if we pray on the earth, we will be under his control. But if we move to the heavens and pray, we pray down from above. In military strategy this is to observe and control the situation below by occupying the high ground. This is exactly like the prayers in Revelation 8. As far as fragrance is concerned, the prayers ascended to God, but as far as God's accomplishment is concerned, the prayers were prayed down from heaven. They were poured down from heaven because they were all uttered in the heavenly realm. Concerning God's acceptance, our prayers should be like sweet-smelling incense ascending to the throne, but with regard to the dealing with the enemy, our prayers should be poured down from the throne. All true men of prayer are seated together with Christ in the heavenlies and pray from the throne.

## **PRAYER ON THE THRONE**

A prayer such as that just referred to is a prayer on the throne, even a reigning prayer. Man's emotion, temper, flesh, opinion, and grievance need to be thoroughly dealt with in such a case. Whenever we have a grievance or anger, we fall from the heavens to the earth and immediately lose our position of ascension to pray. Thus, we have no way to pray.

## **PRAYER OF WARFARE**

All prayers that are expressed in the heavenly realm and from the throne of God are prayers of warfare. He who prays in this way is one who has passed through the cross, resurrected, and ascended. He is on the throne, far above the earth, and is not touched by any earthly thing. The prayers that he expresses from such a realm are prayers that can defeat the devil in the air and bring down God's authority. Like Daniel's prayer, such prayer is able to bring the things of heaven to the earth. It is able to get the heavenly authority through the air and bring it to the earth. This is the fighting prayer.

Please consider: Is there a sinner who does not want to be saved? Is there a saint who does not want to love the Lord? All sinners want to be saved, and all saints desire to love the Lord. But because there is someone in the air who usurps men and controls the men on

earth, sinners are prevented from receiving the gospel, and saints are hindered from seeking the Lord. So it is not enough that we only preach the gospel and minister the Word. We must rise up and live in the heavenly realm to touch the throne of God as Daniel did. We must pray to God that God's heavenly authority may be brought down to the earth. If this is done, you will see that one by one sinners will be saved and one by one saints will rise up to seek and love the Lord, for here there are fighting prayers driving away the power of darkness, bringing in God's authority, and, as a result, causing God to have His will done on earth. They enable God to carry out His salvation and give grace to His children according to His good pleasure.

So every praying person should be one who is in the heavenly realm, touching God's throne, and therefore, able to pour down prayers from heaven. As you are above the earth, the air, and the power of darkness and are seated together with Christ on the throne of God in the heavenlies, the prayers that you utter are prayers of warfare. Having understood this point, you will turn the focus of your attention from man to the devil. When a sinner fails to receive salvation, you should pray, "O God, it is not that he would not repent, but it is the devil that is usurping him. I pray that You cast out the devil from him." When the husband and the wife are in a family quarrel, you will not blame the brother or the sister. Your eyes will see that the brother and the sister are under the power of darkness. So the target of your prayers will not be the brother or sister but the power of darkness that is behind them and on them. This is the wrestling spoken of in Ephesians 6. This is not wrestling against blood and flesh but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies. The target with which we are dealing in our prayers is not man but the devil. All the problems in the church are not with the brothers and sisters but with Satan. The problems in the family also are not with the husband, the wife, or the children but with Satan. The object of the prayer of spiritual warfare is not at all men of blood and flesh but the devil of the spiritual realm. If we are in the heavenly realm, we are able to pray such prayers of ascension, that is, prayers of warfare. Such prayers of warfare are for the driving out of Satan and the ushering in of God's kingdom. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1959*, vol. 4, "Lessons on Prayer," pp. 191-197)